

## **Static From Your End** by **estrelladesimons**

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**Summary:** Mike had become accustomed to the sound of static (or the sound of silence he once joked to himself while in a good mood) but every night for 353 days he had hoped that it would be broken with El's voice. Though she would never respond, something did come across empty radio waves; just not anything Mike would notice for himself.

## Static From Your End

*Day One- November 14 1983*

Mike's bed was a decent temperature, but it wasn't anywhere near comfortable. The air was still, chilly, and painfully quiet, other than the sound of Nancy stirring now and again. For most of Hawkins, it was a peaceful night; nothing had happened the evening before, therefore there was nothing to worry about, nothing to keep them up.

Mike pulled the sheets to his chin, burrowing into them while snuffling away snot and tears. His heart weighed tons as it throbbed hard against his chest. It would be another sleepless night and he had come to terms with it.

He shifted onto his other side, sneezed, burrowed deeper into the sheet, and tried to shut his eyes, but it didn't give him any peace.

*'Goodbye, Mike...'*

If he closed his eyes, he saw her goodbye played back like a film reel.

*'Goodbye, Mike...'*

He looked at the clock. It was around ten, though he could have sworn it was much later. The glow of the digital numbers taunted him, reminding him that he couldn't turn them back. If he could, he'd turn them back a day and be sitting on the bleachers with her enjoying the weight of her head on his shoulder. Turn time back a little less and he would be stealing his first kiss. An hour or so after that, he would be watching her as she —

The sound of a passing car disturbed the still, cold air. Its headlights cast bright lights through the windows. Mike payed very little mind to it until he noticed that the light seemed to linger on the chrome of his walkie-talkie antenna which rest next to the clock (and on top of a book he should have been reading for school) on the night stand.

The light stretched across the wall and faded, the last of the light a glint off the walkie-talkie's boxy body. As soon as the light was gone

the room was just as still, cold, and dark as it was before but Mike's attention was set on the walkie-talkie.

Mike stretched his arm out of the sheets, sat up, and picked up the Realistic Radio. He ran his thumb over the dials and accidentally knocked the 'ON' switch. The sudden sound of empty static startled him as it filled the quiet of the room. He settled into soft hush tracing the positions of the dials with his fingers. The frequencies were still set as Eleven had asked him to so she could find —

Mike threw off his blankets and rose to his feet. He clicked the walkie-talkie back off and carefully opened the door to his room. He poked his head out first to look down the hall. A soft light shone from under Nancy's door and another from his mother's, whose door was left open waiting for his father (who likely would sleep the whole night in the Lazy-Boy).

Mike held the doorknob as he quietly and carefully twisted it back into the latch. He then snuck past the illuminated doorways and tiptoed down the flight of stairs. All the caution was to avoid raising the concern of his mother, who would hound him for being out of bed so late (though, at the moment, he could have been slamming doors and she wouldn't have noticed — his mother was currently too lost in a very...juicy...part of her paperback novel to even notice that her children existed in the same house as her).

Mike made it to the basement and descended the stairs, following the warm glow of the night light inside El's fort. It called to him, invited his trained gaze to it, and welcomed him in with open arms. He kneeled in front of the fort for a moment before pushing up the blanket that had fallen since he'd put it back together.

His heart drummed faster. He could almost still see the image of her curled asleep under the blankets. She'd wake to the sound of him, head lifting, asking if he was okay.

But the image faded, and he was left with the empty fort. Tears welled in his eyes — he felt stupid for thinking that she was really going to be here.

In a way she would be, just not the perfect *never-having-left* way that

he hoped.

He climbed into the fort, the night light holding him close in its orange light as he took his place in the middle of it. Inside this little haven it was as if she were sitting next to him. Her scent filled his nose as he drew a deep breath. The blankets held onto her as if she were just a part of them now.

He placed a hand on the pillow where her head would have been and closed his eyes. Despite his effort a few tears leaked down his cheeks, but with a tug of his sleeve he wiped them away and kept the rest at bay. His hands shook and his lip trembled as he fumbled with the walkie-talkie. The tears still in his eyes blurred his vision, but he knew the walkie-talkie so well that he didn't need to see where the buttons were. He hesitated, only for a moment, then switched on the radio.

The hum returned with a low hush. Swallowing, he raised the speaker close to his lips and pressed down 'TALK.'

"El? Can you hear me?"

He released the button. Nothing but the sound of the static returned.

"Eleven? I..." The tears came back as the pressure of his heart against his ribs became nearly unbearable. "If I could get any sign that you are there...anything..."

Still nothing.

"El...I just want you to know I'm not going to give up on you." His voice cracked unable to hold back his tears anymore letting them flow. "I'll be here... all night — every night — however long it takes. I'll be here. Promise."

Nothing.

"Eleven...I *promise*."

He let go of the button and let the static fill the basement. As he let himself finally cry the weighed pressure on his heart eased, not entirely, but enough to finally relax. Enough to let him realize how

tired he was, how warm the fort was, how...comfortable the blankets were, how...how nice it was...

Mike yawned as he lay down on his side, allowing the pillow to hold most of the walkie-talkies weight. "I'm here for you."

Moments later, Mike was fast asleep, curled in her fort, holding the walkie talkie like a child does a teddy bear. The night light kept him safe within the blanket fort as he ventured on the sea of radio waves to find his dear friend.